



NEWS RELEASE

Media Contact:

Ricardo Santiago
Public Information Officer
213-974-3525
RSantiago@da.lacounty.gov
Twitter: @LADAOOffice

May 6, 2015

Two Women, Three Men Who Helped Crime Victims Honored in Pasadena Ceremony

Two women making their morning stop at an Alhambra coffee shop witness an attempted kidnapping and decide to help the victim. A Montebello man hears the cries of an elderly man being beaten and answers the calls for help. Two men driving by a Burbank gas station see an assailant stabbing a woman and decide to intervene.

These five courageous citizens were honored in Pasadena today by the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office for their brave and selfless actions.

"They stepped up in very dangerous situations. In a split second, they decided they were going to make a difference," Los Angeles County District Attorney Jackie Lacey said. "There is no doubt that our community is safer because of them."

The District Attorney's Office presents an award four times a year to recognize ordinary people who have performed extraordinary acts of valor and selflessness in assisting in the prosecution of criminals, saving victims, preventing crimes or even capturing suspects.

The awards were presented by Deputy District Attorneys Melanie Buccat from the Pasadena Office, Tony Cho of the Elder Abuse Unit and David Ayvazian, formerly with the Alhambra Office.

The honorees are:

**Francisco Godínez, 40, of South Gate, and Zinobi Gerbs, 44, of Burbank
(Case No. GA088187)**

On Nov. 21, 2012, a woman met her ex-husband at a Burbank gas station to facilitate visitation with their daughters. Out of fear for her safety, she always met him in public places.

When the woman arrived, her ex-husband forced his way into her vehicle, displayed a replica handgun and said, “You know what I’m capable of.” He drove off with the woman and their children in the car.

When they stopped at a red light, the woman got out of the car and ran toward the gas station, yelling for help. Zinobi Gerbs was in his car waiting at the light and saw the incident unfold. He drove into the gas station to help.

When the man caught his ex-wife, he pulled out a knife and stabbed her, even as an off-duty sheriff’s deputy tried to stop him. At that point, a third man, Francisco Godínez, grabbed a metal wrench and hit the attacker over the head and then, along with Gerbs, subdued him.

Defendant Trino Godínez, 47, was found guilty on Aug. 14, 2014, of attempted murder, kidnapping, assault with a deadly weapon and criminal threats. He was sentenced to more than 14 years in state prison.

The case was investigated by the Burbank Police Department.

Telésforo Arellano Díaz, 58, of Montebello (Case No. BA422179)

A 40-year-old homeless man violently attacked a 78-year-old man collecting bottles and cans from a dumpster in Montebello on March 14, 2014. The man punched his elderly victim, knocking him to the ground, and then kicked and struck him with a broomstick.

Telésforo Arellano Díaz heard the victim’s cries for help and rushed to his aid just as the defendant was about to hit the victim with a glass bottle. Díaz yelled at the man to stop and then stood in front of the attacker when he attempted to flee.

The man threw the bottle at Díaz narrowly missing his head. Díaz then wrestled him to the ground and held him until police arrived.

Defendant Richard Paul García, 40, was sentenced on July 29, 2014, to eight years in state prison after a jury found him guilty of elder abuse and assault with a deadly weapon.

The case was investigated by the Montebello Police Department.

Jennifer Clark, 43, of Redondo Beach and Connie Tejada, 58, of Downey (Case No. GA090950)

On the morning of Sept. 12, 2013, a 66-year-old parolee met a 24-year-old woman he knew from church at an Alhambra coffee shop. He claimed he wanted to give her a gift.

As the victim parked behind the store, the man, who had removed his GPS monitoring device earlier that day, forced his way into her car while brandishing what appeared to be a handgun. He took her cell phone, hit her in the head and threatened to kill her.

After seeing the struggle, Jennifer Clark made eye contact with the victim who mouthed the words “help me.” Clark began verbally confronting the man, who then jumped into his own car and drove away.

Connie Tejada also saw the attack and followed the man to his car. She got his license plate number and gave it to police.

Defendant Frank Hernandez was found guilty on June 26, 2014, of making criminal threats and was sentenced to 40 years to life in state prison.

The case was investigated by the Alhambra Police Department.

#

About the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office

Los Angeles County District Attorney Jackie Lacey leads the largest local prosecutorial office in the nation. Her staff of nearly 1,000 attorneys, 300 investigators and 800 support staff members is dedicated to seeking justice for victims of crime and enhancing public safety. Last year, the [Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office](#) prosecuted more than 71,000 felony defendants and nearly 112,000 misdemeanor defendants.